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THE PEARL-POET'S IMAGINATIVE TREATMENT OF
HIS BIBLICAL SOURCE IN CLEANNESSE

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of English
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

by

Laura R. McCord

1973

APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

Cleanness, a Middle English homiletic, Biblical-narrative poem, attributed to Chaucer's contemporary the Pearl-poet, has been considered by many critics to be overwhelming in content and unorganized in structure. The poem is, however, unified by imaginative treatment of sources and by original expansions, additions, and deletions that reinforce the themes of cleanness and courtesy.

The poet's methods of using his main source for Cleanness, the Vulgate Bible, include paraphrasing the Biblical source, harmonizing variant or repetitive verses or parts of verses, deleting references that do not serve his didactic or artistic purposes, and, especially, expanding his main source in order to reinforce his dual themes.

The Pearl-poet's expansions and additions visualize scenes in terms familiar to his audience, create living characters who are punished for filthy and discourteous actions, reveal his own philosophy at the same time they reveal his creativity, and reinforce the themes he presents in his three major negative exempla. Although the expansions make Cleanness a long poem, and even though they may seem to complicate the structure, they help unify the poem by their emphasis on the necessity of following God's natural laws--that is, by emphasizing the themes that courtesy and spiritual cleanness are necessary if one is to see God, a promise made in the beatitude the Pearl-poet chose for the text of his homiletic poem.

THE PEARL-POET'S IMAGINATIVE TREATMENT OF
HIS BIBLICAL SOURCE IN CLEANNES

INTRODUCTION

Of the four alliterative poems ascribed to the Pearl-poet, Cleanness has received the least attention from scholars and critics. This lack of attention is probably due more to the fact that Cleanness has been overshadowed by its manuscript companions, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and Pearl, than to its own literary deficiencies, although the seeming lack of structural unity and economy of the poem may also account somewhat for the small amount of recent scholarship. Because of what some critics interpret to be the author's inability to control his imagination and because of his flair for and obvious love of storytelling, Cleanness appears to be overwhelming in content and unorganized in structure. The structure of Cleanness is, without a doubt, complicated, but the writer would argue that it is a unified structure, unified not only by specific techniques and formal devices, but by imaginative treatment of sources and especially by original expansions and additions that reinforce the dual themes of cleanness and courtesy. As a work of literary art, Cleanness is carefully structured; it presents within its opening and closing feast scenes, a series of major exempla that illustrate God's punishment of "filth." The poem is not only interesting in its own right as one of the most important examples of Biblical-narrative poetry extant from the Middle English period, but it also complements and illuminates to some extent the other poems attributed to this author and helps to

reveal the philosophy of the anonymous poet.

Cleanness belongs to the small group of poems associated with the Pearl-poet, all of which are contained in the Cotton MS Nero A.x., now located in the British Museum. Cleanness is the second poem in the manuscript, following Pearl and preceding Patience and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. The four poems are untitled in the manuscript, but titles have been given them by modern editors.¹ Although the evidence is inconclusive, it is generally agreed that Cleanness was written by Chaucer's contemporary the Pearl-poet, not only because the poem is found in the same manuscript as the other poems ascribed to him, but because of the similarities in technique and theme occurring in them. Cleanness is more closely related to Patience than it is to the other poems in the manuscript; in fact, because both of them are homiletic in form, because they are both essentially Biblical paraphrases, and because each uses as its text a specific beatitude, they have often been considered sister poems.² Although the relationship between Cleanness and Pearl and that between Cleanness and Sir Gawain may not be so immediately obvious as that between Cleanness and Patience, some relationships seem to be indicated by similarities in imagery and theme. For example, the pearl as a symbol of purity occurs in the poems, and the theme of stainlessness also is present in Cleanness, Sir Gawain, and Patience. Sir Gawain and Cleanness are related by an emphasis on courtesy and by the descriptions of feasts which open the former and close the latter; and, the descriptions of the celestial city in Pearl and of Babylon in Cleanness suggest an obvious relation between those two poems.

As a Biblical-narrative Cleanness belongs to the same genre as the Old English Caedmonian poems such as Genesis A and B, which recount stories from the Biblical book of Genesis, and Exodus, which relates the story of Moses leading the Israelites out of Egypt. Cleanness is even more closely related to the Cursor Mundi, a long Middle English poem in the tradition of Biblical narrative that describes the seven ages of the world.³ In fact, the Cursor Mundi is one of the various sources that the Pearl-poet probably used for Cleanness, in addition to other literary works such as the French version of Mandeville's Travels, the French version of The Book of the Knight of Tour Landry,⁴ and Roman de la Rose.⁵ The use of these last three sources indicates the poet's familiarity with French literature of romance and with French idiom⁶ and reveals his sophistication and knowledge of literature outside of his native language, all of which would indicate that he was, probably, a highly educated man. In addition, the poet was familiar with many religious works of an apocryphal nature,⁷ as well as with the Vulgate Bible, his main source for Cleanness. It is through his handling of this main source, the Vulgate, that his artistry is best revealed.

Even though the poet did draw heavily on source materials, especially Biblical materials, he created an independent and unified work of art that reveals much about his specific purpose. The poet's overriding didactic purpose is indicated, of course, by his choice of a homiletic structure, consisting of a statement of theme, the presentation of an illustrative New Testament text, an elucidation of that text, and a series of paraphrased Old Testament exempla,⁸ all

linked together by shorter homilies.⁹ A few critics have emphasized the poet's paraphrasing of the Vulgate source; but while paraphrasing per se does constitute one important aspect of his artistry, his creativity and didactic purposes are best revealed not in what he restates from his main source, but in his other treatments of the text. For example, in order to create one unified account, as in the opening feast scene, the poet harmonizes variant or repetitive scriptural accounts and verses. He deletes verses or parts of verses that do not directly reinforce his themes or that might detract from them, and he expands upon his major source in order to emphasize his themes. His expansions, as well as his other alterations, are consistent with his presentation of his two simultaneous themes of cleanness and courtesy. First presented allegorically in the elucidation, these themes are then developed in the three major negative exempla as the poet first illustrates the general punishment God metes out to an unclean and discourteous world; then, His punishment of a specific people, the Sodomites, who show their filth and discourtesy in their specific sexual practices; and finally, the punishment of one unclean and discourteous man, Belshazzar.¹⁰ In presenting his examples, the poet most frequently expands his main source by adding vivid, realistic details to the scenes and to the characters he creates, not only for the sake of verisimilitude but also to express his own beliefs concerning the text. The following discussion will demonstrate the poet's artistic ability in creating a unified work of art through his reinforcement of themes by expansions of his Biblical source.

THE MINOR METHODS: HARMONIZATION AND

DELETION

Cleanness begins with a discussion of the spiritual cleanness God requires of those who serve Him and with a description of His wrath at filth. Using as his text the sixth beatitude, Beati mundo corde: quoniam ipsi Deum videbunt¹¹ (Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God¹²), the poet paraphrases the verse: "~~T~~he hapel clene of his hert hapenez ful fayre, / For he schal loke on oure Lorde wyth a bone chere" (The man clean in his heart is blessed full fair, / For he shall look on our Lord with good cheer) (ll. 27-28).¹³ Using similar paraphrases, the Pearl-poet expands and explains his interpretation of this beatitude throughout the remainder of the poem, especially in the narrative sections.¹⁴ The poet, however, because of the requirements of his alliterative verse, because of his teaching by exhortation, and because of his desire to reinforce his artistic and didactic purposes, frequently expands the verses he paraphrases. Although expansion and paraphrase are the techniques the poet employs most often, harmonization and deletion are also used, and they do reveal the Pearl-poet's ability to use his Vulgate source to suit his own thematic and structural purposes.

Harmonization. The Biblical text is certainly presented in paraphrase, but the elucidation, the second stage of a medieval homily, merges two New Testament accounts of Christ's Parable of the

Wedding Feast. This harmonizing may seem to recall gospel harmonies of the period, such as The Pepysian Gospel Harmony, an organic, continuous narrative of the life of Christ which weaves into one account the four versions given in the gospels.¹⁵ The usual purpose of such gospel harmonies was to present Christ's life as simply and as clearly as possible,¹⁶ and because their purpose involved clarifying the story of Christ, only overlapping or redundant portions of the gospels were deleted,¹⁷ and nothing new was added. The Pearl-poet, however, having different purposes in mind for his work, did not strive for the simplicity and straightforwardness of the gospel harmonies in his blending of Biblical chapters or verses, and his harmonizing included paraphrasing, deleting, and expanding.

Two methods of harmonizing are apparent in Cleanness, one of which is highly complicated, the other, relatively simple. The latter method, in its avoidance of needless repetition, relates more nearly to the methodology of the gospel harmonies. An example of this simple form of harmonizing is God's telling Noah what to take on the ark. Here the poet combines into fourteen lines (329-42) the descriptions found in Genesis 6:18-22 and Genesis 7:1-5. The earliest example of the more complicated method of harmonizing, a process having a completely different purpose from that of the simple gospel harmony, occurs in the elucidation, in which the poet cites Christ's parable of the Wedding Feast. Although he says he is telling the story "As Mapew melez in his masse of þat man ryche" (As Matthew tells in his story of that rich man) (51), the poet is actually harmonizing Matthew's account with that found in Luke.¹⁸ Whereas most of the

story does come from Matthew, lines 55-60 are based on both accounts, and lines 63-70, 94-98, and 101-08 are based only on Luke. This complicated method of harmonizing occurs again in the third exemplum in lines 1157-1260, describing the capture of Jerusalem. Here 2 Kings 24:8-21, 2 Chronicles 36:12-14 and 17-20, Jeremiah 52:1-26, and Daniel 1-6 are harmonized.

Deletion. In addition to harmonizing and paraphrasing, the poet occasionally deletes verses or parts of verses found in the Vulgate; such omissions, however, are rare, for the changes normally rendered by the Pearl-poet involve additions rather than deletions.¹⁹ Nevertheless, his first use of deletion occurs in the elucidation when the poet completely omits Matthew 22:6-7:

6. Reliqui vero tenuerunt servos ejus,
et contumeliis affectos occiderunt.
7. Rex autem cum audisset, iratus est:
et missis exercitibus suis, perdidit
homicidas illos, et civitatem illorum
succendit.

(And the rest laid hands on his servants,
and having treated them contumeliously,
put them to death. But when the king had
heard of it, he was angry, and sending
his armies, he destroyed those murderers,
and burnt their city.)

Why the poet should choose to delete these particular verses is somewhat puzzling, for the activities described in them--the murder of the servants and the king's wrathful vengeance--seem to fit into the picture the poet presents of a God of wrath punishing the sinful. Sir Israel Gollancz conjectured that the omission occurs because of the poet's combining the Matthew and Luke versions of the parable,²⁰ implying that the verses must have been unconsciously omitted in the

process of harmonization. The writer suggests, however, that the poet may have consciously omitted these verses, for the host's anger here is directed not against spiritual defilement but against murder; and therefore, since the vengeance described in these verses does not reinforce the poet's theme specifically, he has chosen to omit them.

The most obvious deletions and omissions to be found in the exempla concern the flood and the destruction of Sodom.²¹ For example, the rainbow as a sign of God's covenant with man is an obvious omission that occurs in the first exemplum. In lines 564-70 the poet describes God making the covenant, a paraphrase of Genesis 9:11 and 15, but all references to the rainbow as the symbol of the covenant, contained in verses 12, 13, 14, 16, and 17, have been omitted. Perhaps the poet has eliminated the rainbow because he wishes to stress God's inherent courtesy to man rather than to emphasize an outward or external show of such courtesy.

In the stories of Abraham and Lot that form the second exemplum, the poet closely follows the actions of Genesis 18 and 19; here, however, he omits any reference to the last part of Chapter 19 in which Lot's daughters, in order to continue the generations, have sexual intercourse with their drunken father. Omission of this scene probably occurs because the poet sees lechery as the particular deadly sin that, as one of the sins of the flesh, destroyed cleanness as well as chastity.²² Furthermore, incest is an unnatural act, and one of the implied reasons for Lot's salvation is that he has retained his natural cleanness in contrast to the unnatural Sodomites. The salvation of Lot is related to the poet's belief that sexual

cleanness is a sign of following natural order or of showing courtesy to the orderly universe God has created.

One of the poet's lesser deletions, the phrase timore perterrita (for she was afraid) in verse 15 of Genesis 18, provides an especially interesting example of the way in which the poet deletes in order to reinforce his theme. In the opening part of the second exemplum, after Abraham has served God under the oak tree, God promises Abraham that Sara will bear a son. Sara, hidden in the dwelling and listening to the conversation, laughs as she hears the promise because she is past the age of childbearing. God knows what she does and asks Abraham why Sara laughs. Hearing the question, Sara comes forward, and because she is afraid, according to the Vulgate, she denies her laughter. Spearing interprets the omission of the phrase explaining Sara's motivation for denial in Cleanness as showing that God does not have the power to cause fear, and he attributes it to the poet's inability to control his imagination.²³ The poet, however, may not intend to reveal a frightening God; Sara's denial is not one of the deadly sins which cannot be forgiven. In addition, both the Vulgate and the poet explain that Sara is past menopause so that what God predicts appears unnatural. Her laughter may reveal disbelief--as well as embarrassment at having been caught in an awkward situation--but it is a disbelief in something that runs contrary to the natural order. It may be that the poet sees God as knowing the reason for Sara's reaction, and therefore, He is not presented as frightening. Also, the God who will destroy Sodom and Gomorrah is not completely a God of terror; His dual nature has

earlier been seen in the parable from which the verses describing God's vengeance were omitted. The poet is concerned with lechery as an unclean, unnatural sin of the flesh, and it is logical that he would delete Biblical verses or parts of verses that do not serve his didactic or his artistic purposes.

In working with his primary source, the poet frequently paraphrases the Vulgate; however, he also harmonizes different Biblical accounts and verses, and he occasionally deletes verses or parts of verses to suit his artistic purpose. It is in the additions to and expansions of his Biblical source, however, that the Pearl-poet truly reveals his creativity and his interpretations of his theme.

THE MAJOR METHOD: EXPANSION

Although the Pearl-poet uses various methods in his treatment of the Vulgate text, his primary tendency is to expand it, which is also characteristic of most other Middle English Biblical narratives, such as the lengthy Cursor Mundi. As pointed out earlier, by presenting vivid scenes in terms familiar to his audience and by creating living characters who are punished for filthy and discourteous actions, the Pearl-poet, in his process of expansion, reveals his own philosophy as he reinforces his themes of cleanness and courtesy. In the elucidation, for example, the poet creates a realistic and familiar scene at the same time that he presents his dual themes:

Thenne þe sergauntez, at þat sawe, swengen þeoroute,
And didnen þe dede þat [is] demed, as he devised hade,
And wyth peple of alle plytez þe palays þay fyllen--
Hit weren not alle on wyvez sunez, wonen wyth on fader.
Wheþer þay wern worpy oþer wers, wel wern þay stowed,
Ay þe best byfore and bryttest atyred,
þe derrest at þe hyze dese þat dubbed wer fayrest;
And syþen on lenþe bilooꝝhe ledez inogh,
And ay a segge soerly semed by her wedez.
So with marschal at her mete mensked þay were;
Clene men in compaynye forknoven were lyte.
And 3et þe symplest in þat sale watz served to þe fulle,
Boþe with menske and wyth mete and mynstrasy noble,
And alle þe laykez þat a lorde a3t in londe schewe.
And þay bigonne to be glad þat god drink haden,
And uch mon wyth his mach made hym at ese
[11. 109-24].

(Then the sergeants, at that saying, rushed out
And did the deed that was decreed, as he had ordered,
And with people of all conditions they filled the palace--
It was not all one man's sons, begotten with one father,

Whether they were worthy or worse, well were they placed,
 Ever the best before and brightest attired,
 The most worthy at the high dais that were fairest dressed;
 And then along the length below people enough,
 Ever a man seems base by his garment.
 Thus with marshal at their food they were honored.
 Few clean men in company were recognized
 And yet the simplest in that hall were served to the full,
 Both with honor and with food and ministry noble,
 And all the amusement that a lord in land ought show.
 And they began to be glad that good drink had
 And each man with his companion made him at ease.)

People of all conditions fill the palace in this scene, and the placement of the guests from the most worthy on the high dais to the humblest at the long tables below would be familiar to the poet's audience, accustomed as they were to a society in which every person knew his ordained place. The Pearl-poet, in presenting the scene as though he were describing a medieval banquet, helps his audience visualize the host's great courtesy in serving with honor and noble ministry all the guests at the same time he elucidates his text.

The feasts found later in the three major exempla--Noah's in the first, Abraham's and Lot's in the second, and Belshazzar's in the third--are thus foreshadowed by the feast in the elucidation. In the first exemplum, the poet slightly expands the account given in Genesis 8:20²⁴ as he describes Noah preparing a thanksgiving sacrifice for God:

Bot Noe of uche honest kynde nem out an odde,
 And hevened up an auter an hal³ed hit fayre,
 And sette a sakerfyse peron of uch a ser kynde
 pat watz comly and clene--God kepez non oþer
 [11. 505-08].

(But Noah of each clean kind took out an odd one,
 And built up an altar and consecrated it fair,
 And set a sacrifice thereon of one of various kind
 That was fair and clean--God keeps none other.)

In describing Noah's sacrifice, the poet twice describes the animals as "clean," whereas the Biblical verse uses the adjective only once. Noah's "fair" consecration of the altar does not occur at all in the Vulgate; the poet adds this word to show Noah's courtesy to God, who has courteously delivered Noah from destruction, and the poet also adds the explanatory phrase that God keeps nothing unclean. Although these expansions are slight, they contribute subtly to the poet's themes. In presenting Abraham's and Lot's feasts in the second exemplum, the poet again makes small but significant expansions for thematic purposes. Genesis 18:8 says that Abraham waited on his visitors and served them butter, milk, and boiled calf, but the eleven-line description in Cleanness includes a "clene clope" on which Abraham placed the pottage in "plater honest" (ll. 633-44). The meal Lot's wife served the angels is also described in the second exemplum, and here the poet expands Lot's directions to his wife on how to prepare the meal and her reaction to the commands in order to emphasize his themes and to develop characters. While these minor additions to the descriptions of Noah's and Abraham's feasts enhance the presentation of the scenes and subtly heighten his themes, a far more elaborate expansion occurs in Belshazzar's Feast (ll. 1357-1522), in the third exemplum, a scene that recalls the earlier Wedding Feast of the elucidation. Although the account of this feast is contained in only four verses of scripture (Daniel 5:1-4), in Cleanness it occupies 171 lines.²⁵ Because Belshazzar, the host of the final feast, is an example of the major sins the poet condemns, he stands in direct contrast to the host in the parable, especially,

and also to some extent to Noah and Abraham, who presented clean and courteous meals to God.

After emphasizing cleanness and courtesy in the story of the Wedding Feast, the poet expands upon Matthew 22:11-13,²⁶ in which the host ejects the man unsuitably dressed. As he manipulates these verses, the Pearl-poet creates believable characters and provides motives for the actions of the two men. Whereas in the Vulgate version the king simply comes into the hall to meet the guests, in Cleanness he wants to "rehayte rekenly þe riche and þe poveren, / And cherisch hem alle wyth his cher, and chaufen her joye" (cheer courteously the rich and the poor, / And entertain them all with his appearance and increase their joy) (ll. 127-28). The host, giving all his guests a friendly welcome, is gracious to all until he sees the guest who "watz not for a halyday honestly arayed" (134), whose clothes are "fyled with werkkez" (136), and who is "ungarynst [improperly dressed] wyth god men to dele" (137). Angered by the man's filth, the host asks the guest, not just the single question in the Biblical version, but three questions:

'Say me, frende,' quod þe freke wyth a felle chere,
'Hou wan þou into þis won in wedez so fowle?
.....
How watz þou hardy þis hous for þyn unhap [to] neþe
In on so ratted a robe and rent at þe sydez?
.....
Hopez þou I be a harlot þi erigaut to prayse?'
[ll. 139-48].

('Tell me, friend,' said the man with a stern countenance,
'How did you make your way into this dwelling in garments
so foul?
.....
How were you bold for your misfortune to approach this house
In so ragged a robe and torn at the sides?

.
 Hoped you I am a beggar your cloak to value?')

One of the additional questions concerns the guest's garments and emphasizes the host's insistence on cleanness and courtesy; the second additional question reinforces the guest's thoughtlessness and causes him to anticipate punishment. Fearfully waiting, the guest who "watz so scoumfit of his scylle, lest he skape hent, / *p*at he ne wyst on worde what he warp schulde" (was so discomfited in his reason, lest he injury receive, / That he did not know what word he should utter) (ll. 151-52) is justified in his fear because the host sends him "'Depe in my doungeoun'" (158) in order "'to teche hym to be quoynt [well-dressed]'" (160). This expansion not only develops characters more fully than the Biblical account does, but it also foreshadows the punishments described later in the three major exempla.

By adding the motivation of fear to the character of the Wedding Guest, the Pearl-poet also foreshadows the fears of other characters. After having heard God's discourse on the reasons for the coming flood and His instructions for building the ark, Noah "Ful graypely gotz . . . and dos Godez hestes, / In dry₃ dred and daunger, *p*at durst do non oþer" (Fully promptly goes . . . and does God's requests, / In heavy dread and danger, that dared do no other) (ll. 341-42). The Pearl-poet's expanded description makes Noah seem more human than does the Biblical account that says only Fecit ergo Noe omnia, quae mandaverat ei Dominus (And Noe did all things which the Lord had commanded him) (Genesis 7:5). After all, Noah has just heard God express His anger at the sinful world and His plans of

destruction, so it is realistic that Noah would be frightened. Noah is not so afraid, though, that he forgets to behave courteously to God; he obeys the instructions without question. Thus he contrasts with the raven, Lot's wife, and Belshazzar, all of whom are discourteous characters. Mentioned only once in the passage in the Vulgate,²⁷ the raven becomes a villain in the twelve-line description in Cleanness. He is "þe raven so ronk [vile], þat rebel watz ever" (455) and a "corbyal untrwe," who "3ederly [entirely] for3ete 3isterday steven [command]" (463) as he eats the filthy carrion, a description that may come in part from apocryphal works well-known in the Middle Ages. Like the Pearl-poet, the author of the Cursor Mundi also seems familiar with the legend of the raven, as indicated by his expanded seven-line description, but he does not emphasize the raven's rebellious disobedience to such an extent as the Pearl-poet does.

Lot's wife, one of the more fully-developed minor characters in the three exempla, "þe balleful burde þat never bode keped" (979), like the raven also rebels. The Biblical account mentions her only three times: first when the angels tell Lot to take his wife and daughters out of the city, then when the angels take the hands of Lot, his wife, and his daughters, and finally, when she looks behind her and is turned into a pillar of salt: Respiciensque uxor ejus post se, versa est in statuum salis (And his wife looking behind her was turned into a statue of salt) (Genesis 19:26). In Cleanness, however, she becomes an important character as Lot instructs her to prepare food for the guests:

'Bot penkkez on hit be p̄refte, what bynk so ³e make,
 For wyth no sour ne no salt servez hym never.'
 Bot ³et I wene þat þe wif hit wroth to dyspyt,
 And sayde softely to hirself: 'Dis un [s] avere hyne
 Lovez no salt in her sauce; ³et hit no skyl were
 þat oper burne be boutē, þa³ bope be nyse.'
 Þenne ho saverez wyth salt her seues uch one,
 Agayne þe bone of þe burne þat hit forboden hade,
 And als ho scelt hem in scorne þat wel her skyl knewen.
 Why watz ho, wrech, so wod? Ho wrathed oure Lorde
 [11. 819-28].

('But remember it be unleavened, what thing so you make,
 For with no leaven nor no salt serve them never.'
 But yet I know that the wife worked it to despite,
 And said softly to herself: 'These disagreeable fellows
 Love no salt in their sauce; yet no skill were
 That other men be without, those both are fastidious.'
 Then she savored with salt her pottages each one
 Against the command of the man who had forbidden it,
 And also she served them in scorn that well her mind knew.
 Why was she, wretch, so foolish? She angered our Lord.)

All has been courteous before; Lot has shown courtesy to the angels,
 and they have courteously responded to his hospitality;²⁸ then Lot's
 wife begins grumbling to herself and breaks the laws of both
 hospitality and obedience. As the wife mutters to herself about her
 guests and the commandment of her husband, she, in a contrary spirit,
 salts the food. In showing Lot's wife in her discourteous and
 defiant use of the forbidden salt, the poet ironically foreshadows her
 transformation to a pillar of salt when she looks back:

Bot þe balleful burde þat never bode keped,
 Blusched byhynden her bak, þat bale for to herkken.
 Hit watz lusty Lothes wyf þat over he [r] lyfte schulder²⁹
 Ones ho bluschet to þe bur³ge, . . .
 [11. 979-82].

(But the wretched wife that never command kept,
 Looked behind her back, that torment to heed.
 It was lusty Lot's wife that over her left shoulder
 Once she looked at the city, . . .)

In both instances she discourteously disobeys and shows a tendency to

vainglory since her refusal to heed the commands can be seen as a desire for power belonging rightfully to her husband and to God. Because the medieval Church and Biblical teaching presented woman as submissive to her husband, the poet would have viewed the transgressions of Lot's wife as the breaking of a natural law. The poet explains her sins as follows:

For two fautes þat þe fol watz founde in mistraupe:
 On, ho served at þe soper salt bifore Dryȝtyn,
 And syþen, ho blusched hir bihynde, þaȝ hir forboden were;
 For on ho standes a ston, and salt for þat oþer,
 And alle lyst on hir lik þat arn on launde bestes
 [ll. 996-1000].

(For two faults the fool was found unfaithful:
 One, she served at supper salt before God,
 And afterwards, she looked behind, though she had been
 forbidden:
 For one she stands a stone, and salt for that other,
 And pasture beasts like to lick on her.)

Earlier the poet asked rhetorically why she was "so wod" that she angered God. She is indeed as discourteous as the raven was to Noah and as foolish as the discourteous guest who came improperly dressed to the Wedding Feast. Just as the guest is punished for his sin, Lot's wife is punished for her two sins. Moreover, she is even more foolish than the Wedding Guest because her sin, like the raven's, is disobedience as well as discourtesy. In glancing back at Sodom, she looks back to the place of unnatural sex. While the Sodomites are punished by the unnatural rain of fire and brimstone, the woman who has gone against the pattern of nature is turned into a pillar of salt which beasts will lick in their natural craving for the mineral, a detail also found in the Cursor Mundi. The animals licking the salt statue obey their natural instincts, their masters, as they lick

the stone that was Lot's wife, an unnatural woman.

"Bolde" Belshazzar not only reflects the qualities of discourteousness and disobedience, he is also gluttonous and proud. In his weakness Belshazzar tries to appear strong, as the poet makes clear in the following description:

Thenne þis bolde Baltazar bipenkkes hym ones
To vouche on avayment of his vayneg [1] orie:
Hit is not innoghe to þe nice al no³ty þink use,
Bot if alle þe worlde wyt his wykked dedes
[11. 1357-60].

(Then this bold Belshazzar bethinks him once
To resolve on exhibitions of his vainglory:
It was not enough the lascivious [Belshazzar] all bad
things use,
But all the world know his wicked deeds.)

Belshazzar, whom the poet ironically describes as "bolde," is revealed in these lines as a weak man, lascivious, proud, and boastful in contrast to the description in Daniel 5:1, which says only that the king gave a banquet and drank wine with his guests. Daniel 5:2 relates that while he was drunk, Belshazzar had the sacred vessels from Jerusalem brought into the banquet room so that his nobles, wives, and concubines could drink from them, a verse the Pearl-poet expands into sixteen lines:

So faste þay we³ed to him wyne, hit warmed his hert,
And breyþed uppe into his brayn and blemyst his mynde,
And al waykned his wyt, and wel ne³ he foles;
For he waytez on wyde, his wenches he byholdes,
And his bolde baronage about bi þe wo³es.
Þenne a dotage ful depe drof to his hert,
And a caytif counsayl he ca³t bi hymselfen.
Maynly his marschal þe mayster upon calles,
And comaundes hym cofly coferes to lance,
And fech forþe vessel þat his fader bro³t,
.....
'Bryng hem now to my borde, of beverage hem fylles,
Let þise ladyes of hem lape--I luf hem in hert!

þat schal I cortaysly kype, and þay schin knawe sone
 þer is no bounte in burne lyk Baltazar þewes'
 [11. 1420-36].

(So fast they brought wine to him, it warmed his heart,
 And rushed up into his brain and dulled his mind,
 And also wakened his senses, and he well nigh became mad;
 For he looks around, his concubines he beholds,
 And his strong barons about by the walls.

Then a folly full deep rushed to his heart,
 And a wicked counsel he conceived by himself.
 Loudly his marshal the master upon calls,
 And commands him quickly the coffers to split open,
 And fetch forth the vessels that his father brought,

 'Bring them now to my board, filled with drink,
 Let these ladies drink from them--I love them in heart!
 That shall I courteously acknowledge, and they shall know soon
 There is no munificence in man like Belshazzar's courtesy.')

In these lines Belshazzar is presented as a drunken, lecherous man, succumbing to the lust of the flesh. Belshazzar also submits to vainglory, revealed in his emphasis on his own "courtesy" (11. 1435-36). The poet's fine sense of irony appears in the descriptions of the king so befuddled by drink, lust, and pride that he breaks a major law of courtesy--he desecrates the holy vessels by using them to show his own power. More sinful than the raven or even Lot's wife, Belshazzar wants to exhibit possessions he thinks are his, but he forgets that the vessels are really the possessions of God. By vividly revealing Belshazzar's motivations, the poet creates more than a poetic representation of sinful actions; he creates a man, who, like an ordinary drunkard, gains a false sense of strength in his drunkenness.

By expanding scenes in order to expose the sinful motivations of some of his characters, by making them far more than just flat characters, the Pearl-poet often reinforces his themes, as has been

noted previously, but there are also several expansions that have as their only purpose the restatement of the main theme of his homily. These expansions seem to reveal much about the poet's personality and his philosophy. Two such expansions, lines 263-68 in the first exemplum and lines 693-96 and 709-12 in the second exemplum, seem to be echoes of Romans 1:24-27, especially verse 27³⁰ which describes men who gave up natural intercourse with women and who lusted for men. The introductory lines to the first exemplum (249-76) relate to Genesis 6:1-4, which describes the giants produced by the daughters of heaven and the sons of men, to which the poet adds,

þer watz no law to hem layd bot loke to kynde,
 And kepe to hit, and alle hit cors cleanly fulfyllen.
 And þenne founden þay fylþe in fleshlych dedez,
 And controeved agayn kynde contrare werkez,
 And used hem unptryftly uch on on oþer,
 And als with oþer, wylsfully, upon a wrange wyse
 [ll. 263-68].

(There was no law laid to them but to look to kind,
 And keep to it, and all its course cleanly fulfill.
 And then they found filth in fleshly deeds,
 And contrived against nature contrary works,
 And used them unthrifftfully each on another,
 And also with other, willfully, in a wrong way.)

This expansion with its emphasis on fleshly deeds and on going contrary to "kynde" relates, of course, to the discourtesy and filth that are violations of God's law, and the entire passage is similar to the introduction to the flood in the Cursor Mundi in which the poet also speaks of going against "kynde." In Cleanness the passage foreshadows as well as parallels God's discourse concerning natural order in the second exemplum:

þay han lerned a lyst þat lykez me ille,
 þat þay han founden in her flesch of fautez þe werst:

Uch male matz his mach a man as hymselfen,
 And fylter folyly in fere on femmalez wyse.
 I compast hem a kynde crafte and kende hit him derne,
 And amed hit in myn ordenaunce oddely dere,
 And dyȝt drwry þerinne, doole alþerswetttest,
 And þe play of paramorez I portrayed myselven;
 And made þerto a maner myriest of oþer,
 When two true togeder had tyȝed hemselven,
 Bytwene a male and his make such merþe schulde co[m]e,
 Wel nyȝe pure paradys moȝt preve no better,
 Elles þay moȝt honestly ayþer oþer welde;
 At a styлле stollen steven, unstered wyth syȝt,
 Luf-lowe hem bytwene lasched so hote,
 ꝑat alle þe meschevez on mold moȝt hit not sleke.
 Now haf þay skyfted my skyl and scorned natwre,
 And henttez hem in heþying an usage unclene.
 Hem to smyte for þat smod smartly I þenk,
 ꝑat wyȝez schal be by hem war, worlde wythouten ende'
 [11. 693-712].

('They have learned a pleasure that I like ill,
 That they have found in the flesh the worst faults.
 A male makes his mate a man as himself
 And joins unchastely together in female ways.
 I devised them a natural way and taught it secretly
 And esteemed it in my ordinance singularly dear,
 And ordained love therein, intercourse sweetest of all,
 And the play of love I devised myself;
 And made thereto a mode most pleasing,
 When two faithful had tied themselves together,
 Between a male and his mate such joy should come,
 Well nigh pure paradise might prove no better,
 Provided that they might cleanly use each other;
 At a still secret assignation, undirected with glance,
 Flame of love burns between them so hot,
 That all the misfortune in the world might not slake it.
 Now they have disobeyed my decrees and scorned nature,
 And practice in contempt an unclean usage.
 Them to smite for that filth severely, I think,
 That people take warning by them, world without end.')

The first four lines and lines 709-10 of the above passage again
 echo Romans 1:24-27; lines 697-708, however, are the author's original
 expansion.³¹ Spearing views the terminology and comparisons in these
 lines as an address to a courtly audience; he also believes the lines
 have a "relish" one would not expect in a medieval poem on purity.³²

Although the writer agrees that the passage would probably appeal to a courtly audience, it is not such an unusual passage when it is recalled that the author of this poem is presumably the author of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. The writer also believes that the Pearl-poet may have been thinking of the natural relationship between man and woman suggested in Genesis 2:23-24, in which Adam explains that Eve is bone of his bone and that a man leaves his parents to become one with his wife. The poet emphasizes the "kynde crafte" that God esteemed in his singularly dear ordinance; also, in order to have paradise, the man and wife must use each other cleanly. This natural way of love contrasts with the relationships of people who have disobeyed God's decree and have scorned nature. The contrast, then, arises primarily between natural and unnatural sexuality, not between courtly love and sodomy. Unnatural sex is discourteous to God's law, and lechery is one of the deadly sins because it is unnatural; the sexual relationship between man and woman, however, is natural and is accepted by the ordinance of marriage. God will smite for their filth all those who pervert the natural ordinance, just as the host in the elucidation punished the Wedding Guest whose filthy clothes allegorically represented his unnatural and discourteous works in life. Again the Pearl-poet shows the naturalness of the heterosexual relationship when Lot offers his daughters to the Sodomites in place of his guests. Motivated by courtesy, a courtesy that involves the willing sacrifice of his daughters' virginity, Lot also wants to teach the Sodomites natural ways. He tells them, "'Bot I shal kenne yow by kynde a crafte þat is better'" (865), a single added line that

comes between two paraphrased Vulgate verses. The phrase "by kynde a crafte" echoes the "kynde crafte" of line 697, and is, in all probability, an original addition by the poet; the line is not a Biblical paraphrase and has no equivalent in the Cursor Mundi. Since fornication between male and female is "by kynde," it seems that the Pearl-poet would see it as a less serious sin than sodomy, a practice widespread in the Middle Ages.³³ The two longer expansions based on Romans and the added line in Lot's speech reflect the poet's philosophy while they enforce his themes.

The poet's philosophical extensions and his developed characters reveal his personal beliefs and his artistry, but he can also create, for didactic purposes, vivid sensory scenes of fear and destruction in his negative exempla. For example, the handwriting on the wall and Belshazzar's immediate reaction to it are given in two verses in the scriptural account,³⁴ while the Pearl-poet expands the scene to twenty lines:

For þer a ferly bifel þat fele folk seȝen--
 Fyrst knew hit þe kyng, and alle þe cort after:
 In þe palays pryncipale upon þe playn wowe,
 In contrary of þe candelstik þat clerest hit schyned,
 Þer apered a paume, wyth poyntel in fyngres,
 Þat watz grysly and gret, and grymly he wrytes;
 Non oper forme bot a fust faylande þe wryste,
 Pared on þe parget, purtrayed lettres.
 When þat bolde Baltazar blusched to þat neve,
 Such a dasande drede dusched to his hert,
 Þat al falewed his face and fayled þe chere;
 Þe stronge strok of þe stonde strayned his joyntes,
 His cnes cachches to close, and cluchches his hommes,
 And he wyth platting his paumes displayes his lers,
 And romyes as a rad ryth þat rorez for drede,
 Ay biholdand þe honde til hit hade al graven,
 And rasped on þe roȝ woȝe runisch sauez.
 When hit þe scrypture hade scraped wyth a s[c]rof penne,
 As a coltor in clay cerves þo forȝes,

Denne hit vanist verayly and voyded of syȝt;
 Bot þe lettres bileved ful large upon plaster
 [ll. 1529-40].

(For there a marvel befell that many folk saw--
 First the king knew it, and all the court after:
 In the royal palace upon the plain wall,
 Opposite the candlestick that clearest it shone,
 There appeared a hand, with stylus in fingers,
 That were ghastly and strong, and grimly it writes;
 No other form but a fist missing the wrist,
 But on the plaster, portrayed letters.
 When that bold Belshazzar glanced at that hand,
 Such a dazing dread dashed to his heart,
 That his face became pale and the countenance blanched,
 The strong stroke of the blow strained his joints,
 His knees struck close, and he clutched his knee caps,
 And by striking his palms he displayed his features,
 And roared as a frightened bull that roars for dread,
 Ever beholding the hand until it had engraved all,
 And scratched on the wall mysterious words,
 When it had scraped the scripture with a rough pen
 As a colter of plough carves furrows in clay,
 Then it vanished verily and disappeared from sight;
 But full large the letters remained upon plaster.)

The scene described above elaborately reveals fear and terror while the Biblical passage presents a brief visual image, stark and abnormal. By relating the activities to everyday events such as bulls roaring in fear and plows cutting furrows, the poet makes his audience identify with the dazed, drunken king and creates a picture terrifying in its strange familiarity. The simile of the plow cutting furrows would have been both a familiar sight and a familiar literary image to a medieval audience.³⁵ This scene, forecasting destruction as punishment for sin, foreshadows the expanded description of Belshazzar's death and parallels the destruction scenes in the two earlier exempla.

The destructive storms both make manifest God's wrath at the filth of mankind. The description of the flood in the first exempla

(ll. 359-402) closely paraphrases the account in Genesis 6:11-12, 17-23 describing the rising floodwaters and the destruction of all life. The description given in Cleanness is also similar to the account in the Cursor Mundi of specific animals and people fleeing, but the Pearl-poet adds descriptions of people in love relationships as they suffer the flood:

Uche burde wyth her barne þe byggyng þay levez,

 Frende3 fallen in fere and faþmed togeder,
 To dry3 her delful deystyne and dy3en alle samen;
 Luf lokez to luf and his leve takez,
 For to ende alle at onez and for ever twynne
 [ll. 378-402].

(Each woman with her child the home they leave,

 Friends fell together and embraced together,
 To suffer their doleful destiny and die all together;
 Love looked to love and his leave took,
 For to end all at once and for ever part.)

The mother and child fleeing together, the friends embracing, and the lovers looking at each other add a personal terror to the scene. Even the seemingly innocent are punished along with the filthy as God, working through the elements of storm and flood, destroys those people whose unclean and discourteous ways have enraged Him. Even though the poet vividly presents the flood, it is not as terrifying as the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Part of the difference may be that the flood, composed of natural elements, causes general destruction, while the rain composed of unnatural fire and sulphur destroys a specific group of men who have especially exasperated God by their particular unnatural sexual practices. The Biblical account of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is contained in only two

verses of scripture,³⁶ which the Pearl-poet expands into twenty-two lines of poetry.

Ye gret God in his greme bygynnez on lofte;
 To wakan wederez so wylde þe wyndez he callez,
 And þay wropely upwafte and wrastled togeder,
 Fro fawre half of þe folde flytande loude.
 Clowdez clustered bytwene, kesten up torres,
 Þat þe þik þunder-þrast þirled hem ofte.
 Ye rayn rueled adoun, ridlande þikke,
 Of felle flaunkes of fyr and flakes of soufre,
 Al in smolderande smoke smachande ful ille,
 Swe aboute Sodamas and hit sydez alle,
 Gorde to Gomorra, þat þe grounde laused,
 Abdama and Syboym, þise ceteis alle faure,
 Al birolled wyth þe rayn, rostted and brenned,
 And ferly flayed þat folk þat in þose fees lenged.
 For when þat þe helle herde þe houndez of heven,
 He watz ferlyly fayn, unfolded bylyve;
 Þe grete barrez of þe abyme he barst up at onez,
 Þat alle þe regioun torof in riftes ful grete,
 And cloven alle in lyttle cloutes þe clyffez aywhere,
 As lance levez of þe boke þat lepes in twynne.
 Þe brethe of þe brynston bi þat hit blende were,
 Al þo citees and her sydes sunkken to helle
 [ll. 947-68].

(The great God in his wrath began on high
 To raise airs so wild that winds he called,
 And they fiercely rose up and wrestled together,
 From four corners of the world fighting loud.
 Clouds clustered between, casting up towered cumulus,
 That thick thunder-bolt pierced them often.
 The rain fell down, falling thick,
 Of cruel sparks of fire and flakes of sulphur,
 All in smoldering smoke smelling full ill,
 To rush about Sodom and all its sides,
 Rush to Gomorrah, that the ground loosened,
 Admah and Zeboim, these cities all four,
 All drenched with the rain, roasted and burned,
 And dreadfully terrified folk in those cities stayed.
 For when that Hell heard the hounds of heaven,
 He was wonderfully glad, opened up immediately;
 The great bars of the abyss he burst at once,
 That all the region tumbled into fissures full great,
 And split all in little shreds the cliffs everywhere,
 Like lanced leaves of the book that fly in two.
 The smell of the brimstone was mingled by that,
 All those cities and their sides sunk into hell.)

In contrast to the Biblical account, the description of the storm in Cleanness, contrasting to a typical Old Testament description of a rain of fire and brimstone, becomes an unnatural storm, including wrestling winds that fight loudly, sparks of fire and flakes of sulphur that drench and roast the people in the cities. The poet uses images familiar to his audience such as the image of the knife splitting paper, graphically revealing that the cities are no more to this storm than paper is to a knife. The expansion here also appeals directly to the senses of sight, hearing, and smell. Unlike the storm in the first exemplum, which is similar to the storm in Patience, (a fierce, natural storm used to punish Jonah for hiding on the ship and to show him that he cannot escape God), in that it emphasizes "a terrible aspect of nature, perhaps with the intent of driving across the point that God is inflicting punishment by natural agencies,"³⁷ this storm is unnatural. The rain is not water, but flakes of fire and sulphur that fall thickly and stink. "Helle," when he hears the supernatural hounds of heaven,³⁸ opens up an abyss into which the cities sink. The Sodomites who have indulged in unnatural sexual practices are punished by an unnatural deluge.

The expanded description of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah shows the poet's ability to present a pictorial scene that appeals to the senses, while also presenting the theme of unnatural punishment for unnatural sins. Although God may be patient with Sara, Nebuchadnezzar, Noah, and Abraham, He turns a terrible vengeance on those who break his natural laws. The poet states this idea explicitly in his closing lines:

þat unclannes tocleves in corage dere
 Of þat wynnelych Lorde þat wonyes in heven,
 Entyses hym to be tene, tel [des] up his wrake
 [11. 1806-08].

(That uncleanness is cleft asunder in noble heart
 Of that gracious Lord that lives in heaven,
 Provokes him to be angry, raises up his vengeance.)

God, as the poet has shown in the three major exempla of Cleanness, is made wrathful by filth and discourtesy of any kind, but He is especially angered by behavior contrary to the natural order.

In showing God's punishment of filth, the Pearl-poet stays close to his Biblical source, but he does not limit himself to mere paraphrasing of the Vulgate text. By harmonizing his source material, by deleting references that do not serve his didactic or artistic purposes, and most of all, by expanding his main source in order to reinforce his themes, the poet composes an independent work of art. Although the paraphrasing, harmonizing, and deleting of his primary source exhibit the poet's artistic ability, his expansions and additions best reveal his creativity and philosophy. Even though the expansions make Cleanness a long poem, and even though they may seem to complicate the structure, they help unify it by their emphasis on following God's natural laws--that is, by emphasizing courtesy and spiritual cleanliness, characteristics that will allow one to see God.

NOTES

NOTES

¹ The poem has been titled both Cleanness and Purity, but the writer prefers to use Cleanness rather than Purity as a title because "Clannesse" is the opening word of the poem and because the poet uses "clene of hert" in his paraphrase of the beatitude which is the text of the poem.

² Critics disagree, however, about whether Patience and Cleanness are written in the same verse form. Most critics believe that Patience is written in quatrains; some disagree about Cleanness. Gollancz, in his edition, presents the poem arranged in quatrains, but Menner divides the poem into fifteen sections, rather than into quatrains; he believes that quatrains would disconnect parts of the poem that should be connected and would retard movement. Since the writer has used Menner's text, she has quoted as he presents the lines.

³ Richard Morris, ed., Cursor Mundi: A Northumbrian Poem of the XIVth Century, Part VI (1892; rpt. London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. ix.

⁴ Margaret Williams, The Pearl Poet: His Complete Works (New York: Random House, 1967), p. 39.

⁵ Robert J. Menner, ed., Purity: A Middle English Poem (1920; rpt. Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1970), p. xli.

⁶ Mabel Day, "Introduction," Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, ed. Sir Israel Gollancz (1940; rpt. London: Oxford University Press, 1957), p. xxxi.

⁷ Marie Hamilton, "The Pearl-Poet," A Manual of the Writings in Middle English, 1050-1500, gen. ed. J. Burke Severs (New Haven, Connecticut: Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1970), p. 352.

⁸ Hamilton, p. 348.

⁹ Brian Stone, ed., The Owl and the Nightingale, Cleanness, St. Erkenwald (Baltimore: Penguin Books, Inc., 1971), p. 48.

¹⁰ John Gardner, The Complete Works of the Gawain-Poet (1965; rpt. Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1970), p. 68.

11 Biblica Sacra Latina (New York: Harper and Brothers, n.d.). Subsequent citations from the Vulgate in the text are from this edition.

12 Matthew 5:8. All translations of the Vulgate are from The Holy Bible, Translated from the Latin Vulgate (New York: Edward Dunigan and Brother, Catholic Publishing House, 1868).

13 The translations of the Middle English quotations are the writer's own literal translations of the text found in Menner's edition of Purity. The writer has translated all long quoted passages; in a few instances, where the meaning of the Middle English is clear, the writer has not provided a translation. The intention of the translation was that of rendering the Middle English lines into a literal Modern English translation; no attempt was made to render the lines poetically.

14 Menner, p. xlix.

15 Margery Goates, ed., The Pepysian Gospel Harmony (London: Oxford University Press, 1920), p. xiv.

16 Goates, p. xiv.

17 Goates, p. 1.

18 The account given by the Pearl-poet follows this pattern: lines 51-54 are based on Matthew 22:2-3; 55-60 on Matthew 22:4 as well as Luke 14:17; 61-62 on Matthew 22:5; 63-70 on Luke 14:18-20; 77-93 on Matthew 22:8-10 (the poet reverses the order of 8 and 9); 94-98 on Luke 14:22-23; 101-04 on Luke 14:21; 105-08 on Luke 14:24, and lines 125-60 are expansions of Matthew 22:11-13.

19 Menner, p. li.

20 Sir Israel Gollancz, ed., Cleanness: An Alliterative Tripartite Poem on the Deluge, the Destruction of Sodom, and the Death of Belshazzar, by the Poet of Pearl (London: Oxford University Press, 1921), I, 81.

21 The poet harmonizes and expands to such an extent in the Belshazzar story that any deletions he may have made there do not stand out or seem of great importance.

22 For an example of the belief that lechery destroyed cleanness, see M. W. Bloomfield, The Seven Deadly Sins (1952; rpt. East Lansing, Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 1967), p. 164.

23 A. C. Spearing, The Gawain-Poet: A Critical Study (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 60.

24 AEdificavit autem Noe altare Domino: et tollens de cunctis pecoribus et volucris mundis, obtulit holocausta super altare.

25 Although the major source for the description of the banquet and the banquet hall was Mandeville's Travels (see Menner, p. xxxix and Spearing, p. 63), the Pearl-poet's own style and ability are evident in these lines. Compare lines 114-24 of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight; see also Robert W. Ackerman's "'Pared out of Paper': Gawain 802 and Purity 1408," JEGP 56 (1957), 410-17.

26 Intravit autem rex ut videret discumbentes, et vidit ibi hominem non vestitum veste nuptiali. 12. Et ait illi: Amice, quomodo huc intrasti non habens vestem nuptialem? At ille obmutuit. 13. Tunc dixit rex ministris: Ligatis manibus et pedibus ejus, mittite eum in tenebras exteriores: ibi erit fletus, et stridor dentium.

27 Genesis 8:6-7.

28 O. F. Emerson in "A Note on Middle English Cleanness," MLR 10 (1915), 373-75, discusses the influences of Jewish legends and rabbinic tradition on the Pearl-poet. Emerson relates from Louis Ginzberg's Legends of the Jews that it was courteous to show reluctance when an invitation was issued by an ordinary man. Emerson also discusses possible sources for the adding of the salt to the food by Lot's wife.

29 That Lot's wife looks over her left shoulder brings to mind the superstition, mentioned by Margaret Williams, of its being bad luck to look back over the left shoulder. Another superstition which relates is that if one spills salt, he should throw a pinch of it over his left shoulder to avoid bad luck.

30 Romans 1:27: Similiter autem et masculi, relicto naturali usu feminae, exarserunt in desideriis suis in invicem, masculi in masculos turpitudinem operantes, et mercedem, quam oportuit, erroris sui in semetipsis recipientes.

31 Menner, in his notes (p. 93), says that lines 693-708 are "the poet's own elaboration." The writer limits the "elaboration" to lines 697-708 because she thinks the other lines are based on Romans 1:24-27.

32 Spearing, p. 72.

33 Ernst R. Curtius, European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages, trans. Willard R. Trask (1953; rpt. New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 113.

34 Daniel 5:5-6: In eadem hora apparuerunt digiti, quasi manus hominis scribentis contra candelabrum in superficie parietis aulae regiae, et rex aspiciebat articulos manus scribentis. 6. Tunc facies regis commutata est, et cogitationes ejus conturbabant eum: et compages renum ejus solvebantur, et genua ejus ad se invicem collidebantur.

35 For a discussion of the plow as a literary image, see Curtius, pp. 313-14.

36 Genesis 19:24-25: Igitur Dominus pluit super Sodomam et Gormorrham sulphur et ignem a Domino de caelo. 25. Et subvertit civitates has, et omnem circa regionem, universos habitatores urbium, et cuncta terrae virentia.

37 Norman Berlin, "Patience: A Study in Poetic Elaboration," Studia Neophilologica, 33 (1961), 82.

38 According to Gollancz (Cleanness, Vol. I, p. 93), the "houndez of heven" are a pack of spectral dogs whose baying forecasts disaster as well as death. The image is unusual and is the only example of the phrase listed in the Middle English Dictionary.

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